

HEARING STATEMENT
FINANCE AND HELP COMMITTEES JOINT HEARING
CHILD CARE: SUPPORTING WORKING FAMILIES
U.S. SENATOR MIKE DEWINE
MARCH 19, 2002

Thank you for holding this joint hearing today on the issue of the workforce and child care an issue of great importance for both committees and more importantly to American families. All of us here today know that our children are the most vulnerable members of our population and yet our most valuable resources. As the parents of eight and grandparents of six, soon to be seven, my wife, Fran and I know the responsibility, time and dedication it takes to ensure that children B especially very young children B receive the proper care.

The first five years of a child=s life are a time of momentous change. Research shows that a child=s brain size doubles between birth and age three. I remember my own children during this time, and it

seemed like everyday they were learning and doing something for the first time B walking, crawling, learning another new word. Kids are like sponges, particularly at this early stage of life. And, with 75% of children less than five years of age in some kind of regular child care arrangement, the quality of child care is an import part of our children and families= lives, from the day children are born. No one can replace a mother but, parents need to feel confident that the people caring for their children are giving them the same type of love and support that they would provide.

Since the implementation of Ohio Works First, Ohio'swelfare program, 2/3 of those leaving the welfare roles report that they are working. Many of these newly employed works have children under the age of 5, and the average child care caseload in the State has increased by 1/3.

Nationally, close to 6 million infants and toddlers are regularly cared for by

someone else while their mothers work, many as early as three months of age. The use of centers as a source of care for children under the age of three has tripled since the 70's. Centers are here to stay, so we must make sure that the care these children are receiving is quality.

The quality of care and interactions that children experience during their first years of life play a pivotal role in preparing our children for kindergarten more importantly for life. Kindergarten teachers could tell you on day one, which students received quality pre-primary education and which ones hadn't gone to a quality program or had never been in an structured setting before at all.

Research shows that children who attend quality childcare programs when they were three or four years-old scored better on math, language, and social skills in early elementary school than children who

attended poor quality childcare programs. High quality early childhood programs have several factors in common: low teacher ratio, well-trained and paid teachers, and low staff turnover.

I am eager to hear from the panel as to how they view the relationship between child care and the workforce. These are all very complex issues. We need to find a balance between quality child care programs and ensuring that we reach as many children as possible. Again, I thank both Chairmen for holding this hearing, and I look forward to working with my colleagues on these vital issues.